Council/Wording confusing, Perkins says

From A1

what's being accomplished through the back door is what was unable to be accomplished through the front door," said Tom Minnery, spokesman for the Focus on the Family ministry.

Others are simply confused and want an explanation from the council. That was not forthcoming Tuesday when Will Perkins, chairman of Colorado For Family Values, the group that authored Amendment 2, asked the council what it meant by "sexual nature."

He did not get what he considered a straight answer.

"I don't know whether I'm opposed to it or not," Perkins said. "I don't know what it means."

The confusion surprises Mayor Mary Lou Makepeace: "There's no new ground here."

In her mind, the resolution includes gays and lesbians as groups to be protected from discrimination. It's meant to afford them respect and dignity — nothing more.

But Councilman Bill Guman says the significance runs deep. The council might have a sent a message that it is willing to consider gay-rights measures.

"The door is open," he said.

It's not even clear if gay city employees have any new rights under the resolution.

City Attorney Jim Colvin said it gives gay employees the ability to lodge complaints with their bosses.

Not so, said Steve David, the city's Human Resources director. Only employees who are in so-called protected classes defined in federal civil rights legislation — such as race, gender, color and national origin — can file a grievance with city officials over discrimination.

They agree the resolution is not a law and doesn't grant civil rights protection to gays. Nor does it allow them to suddenly demand benefits such as medical coverage for same-sex partners.

However it is viewed, the resolution is a dramatic departure for the council, given its history on the subject of gay rights.

In 1991, the council rejected a civil rights law, which initially included discrimination protection for gays.

Even though the measure was scrapped, it gave birth to Amendment 2, a constitutional amendment that banned laws protecting gays from discrimination based on their sexual orientation. State voters approved Amendment 2 in 1992, but it was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court a year ago.

Previous council members likely wouldn't have passed the resolution, Colvin said.

"We brought to the council five, six, seven years ago a human relations ordinance," Colvin said. "The previous council didn't think in terms of what's in the best interests of the city, its citizens and the city employees. They tended to think in terms of their own political agendas and interests."

WASHINGTON

Senate trims Medicare, clips affluent elderly

Monthly premiums, eligibility age to rise

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Determined to trim the price tag of government health care for the elderly, the Senate voted Tuesday to increase monthly Medicare premiums for better-off seniors and gradually raise the eligibility age for benefits to 67.

The votes demonstrated a willingness by the Senate to take on the politically potent elderly population, even though both proposals face an uncertain future.

The higher premiums were adopted as an alternative to higher office-visit deductibles for higher-income Medicare recipients. Republicans said the higher premiums would affect only 5 percent of most affluent senior citizens, but Democrats immediately launched an effort to overturn the Senate's action.

The votes came as the Senate continued working through a sweeping bill that promises to balance the budget by 2002. Final passage of the overall measure was expected today.

The House was also poised to approve a similar bill today; both chambers planned to then turn to a companion measure cutting taxes by a net $85 billion through 2002.

Higher premiums would begin for couples earning $75,000.

Earlier Tuesday, the Senate thwarted a Democratic attempt to kill a provision to charge Medicare recipients $5 for each visit they receive from home health-care workers.

MATTRESS SALE

Plug-in air fresheners take their toll

1,800 injuries on file with commission

Like — Who makes these

GT 6/25/97

Resolution revives issue of gay rights

Council's action takes many people by surprise

By **Rich Laden**
The Gazette

At first glance, it seemed like nothing more than a routine City Council resolution, adopted unanimously with little fanfare.

It said the council will have "zero tolerance for any form of discrimination of a racial, ethnic, sexual or religious nature" within city government.

Sounds simple enough: Employees are not to discriminate against each other or anyone with whom they do business. And city executives are to enforce the resolution, just as they carry out hundreds of other council directives.

Language that refers to "sexual nature" automatically attracts the attention of Colorado Springs residents and interest groups. They remember the bitter fight over gay rights and Amendment 2 — which started in the Springs.

It's no surprise, then, that the language elevated the resolution in the eyes of some, making them wonder where the new council is headed and what it means.

Council members disagree over whether the measure is symbolic or substantive. City staffers argue whether gay employees can use the measure to address grievances. And interest groups wonder if it signals a softening of attitudes toward gays at City Hall and in the community.

"I think the community as a whole is moving to recognize that it's a kinder, gentler community than it may have been represented as," said Frank Whitworth, director of Ground Zero, a Springs gay advocacy group.

"And the City Council is reflecting that move by the community."

Others read the resolution as perhaps a sneaky attempt to promote gay interests.

"This sends a signal that

See **COUNCIL**/A3

■ **THOUGHT FOR TODAY:** "The press, like fire, is an excellent servant, but a terrible master."

James Fenimore Cooper,
American author,
1789-1851

CORRECTIONS

The Gazette strives to be accurate and complete in its coverage. Errors of fact or omission will be corrected promptly. Corrections in obituaries can be found on the obituaries page. To notify an editor about a mistake, call 636-0266.

In a story and headline in Tuesday's Gazette, the word archaeology was misspelled.

The Gazette

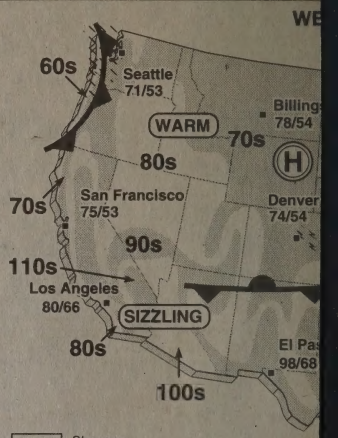
TO REACH AN EDITOR

Steven A. Smith, Editor
636-0105
FAX: 636-0202
e-mail: EDITORGT@aol.com
Jon Stepleton, Public Editor
636-0220
Wayne Stewart, Assistant Editor
636-0189
Terri Fleming, Managing Editor
636-0384
Gary Burns, News Editor
636-0140
Cliff Foster, City Editor
636-0363
Jeff Thomas, Business Editor
636-0372
Joan Zales, Features Editor
636-0273
Barbara Reichert, Sports Editor
636-0254
Susan Edmondson, Entertainment Editor
636-0270
Bonnie Jo Mount, Director of Photography
636-0245
Peter Pauley, Art Director
636-0145
Victor Greto, Research Center Manager
636-0182
News
636-0266
Evenings, weekends
636-0241

Customer Service

Low ...

NATION



City	Yest.	Today	Thurs.
Albany, NY	79 55 sh	90 68 pc	87 56 pc
Albq., NM	96 61 s	93 63 s	93 60 pc
Amarillo, TX	92 65 s	88 60 s	84 60 pc
Anchorage, AK	72 49 pc	75 54 pc	75 56 pc
Atlanta, GA	88 69 t	88 70 pc	86 70 c
Atl. City, NJ	86 57 pc	94 74 pc	92 62 pc
Austin, TX	90 73 pc	90 73 pc	91 70 pc
Bangor, ME	82 53 s	80 60 pc	88 53 pc
Billings, MT	72 48 pc	78 54 s	90 58 s
Birmingham, AL	92 72 pc	87 70 t	85 69 c
Bismarck, ND	75 59 c	78 47 s	88 60 s
Boise, ID	78 46 s	86 54 s	86 53 s
Boston, MA	81 64 pc	80 71 pc	93 60 pc
Buffalo, NY	83 63 r	90 68 pc	81 56 pc
Burlington, VT	78 53 pc	84 66 r	83 53 pc
Casper, WY	79 45 s	78 48 s	92 54 pc
Charleston, SC	90 72 pc	91 72 pc	92 73 pc
Charleston, WV	93 63 s	92 70 pc	86 65 sh
Charlotte, NC	92 72 pc	92 72 pc	90 70 pc
Cheyenne, WY	77 55 pc	70 49 pc	80 53 pc
Chicago, IL	94 75 po	86 62 t	80 58 s
Cincinnati, OH	93 65 s	93 70 pc	83 63 c
Cleveland, OH	92 73 pc	90 68 pc	82 58 pc
Concord, NH	82 51 pc	84 63 pc	90 53 pc
Dallas, TX	92 75 pc	92 72 pc	90 69 pc
Des Moines, IA	88 72 r	84 60 t	81 61 s
Detroit, MI	93 72 pc	90 66 pc	81 56 pc
Duluth, MN	72 50 r	72 49 s	74 54 s
El Paso, TX	102 73 s	98 68 s	101 66 s
Fairbanks, AK	79 56 pc	76 54 pc	80 56 pc
Fargo, ND	75 67 r	77 49 s	85 62 s